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By Any Other Name

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CPYRGHT

Ransom is ransom.

Well, after all is said and done, the Administration has been up to something in Cuba. It is trying to erase a guilt complex and is putting American prestige and treasure on the line to do it.

Last year, when the first blackmail attempt was attempted by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro on the basis of prisoners-for-tractors, a howl of protest went up across the nation and ended in the rescue committee's demise. The bartering unit was given impetus in the first place by a telephone call from President Kennedy to Eleanor Roosevelt and Walter Reuther.

At that time we sympathized with the White House's commiseration after the dismal failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion but held that to enter into such a deal with Senor Castro's extortionists was unthinkable.

Cuba, according to White House insiders, has been a bone in the President's throat. The same can be said for the nation's last year's efforts to free the Cuban captives was shouted down in the full blaze of national publicity. This year the White House and the Justice Department have been rather clandestine in their support of the Cuban ransom, although they picked a dead-giveaway to handle the negotiations: Atty. James B. Donovan, who as an agent for the CIA negotiated the spy-swap that freed U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers. Mr. Donovan is also the Democratic nominee for the U. S. Senate in New York, coincidentally.

Supposedly the deal calls for the U. S. Government to underwrite the shipment of some \$13 million in medicine and food to Cuba, which is not exactly our idea of a blockade. A price tag of \$62 million has been put on the cache of prisoners and at this point, because of an ironclad secrecy lid dropped on the affair, nothing seems to be very definite, at least as far as the public is allowed to know.

Unfortunately for the Cuban barter strategists the story broke before Congress went home to get re-elected. The Administration, it appears, is determined to deal with Castro directly or indirectly or circumspectly for the freedom fighters abandoned in April, 1961.

What was that we used to hear about prestige?